



An Roinn Airgeadais
Department of Finance

E109/24/01

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Circular 17/2001: Competition for promotion to Assistant Principal (higher scale)

A Dhuine Uasail.

1. I am directed by the Minister for Finance to state that, by agreement between the Official and Staff Sides, an interdepartmental competition will be held for promotion to Assistant Principal (higher scale) posts in the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Finance.

Posts to be filled from the competition

2. A "fillable vacancy" is defined as a vacancy (in a new or existing post) which is to be filled by promotion in the grade of Assistant Principal (higher scale) in the Department of the Taoiseach or the Department of Finance. Posts filled by special interdepartmental competition will not count as fillable vacancies.

3. Candidates successful at the final stage of the competition will be placed on the main panel, known as **Panel B**. It will be used to fill every third fillable vacancy in each department. A further panel, **Panel A**, will consist of candidates on Panel B who are Higher Executive Officers or Administrative Officers in the Department of the Taoiseach or the Department of Finance. It will be used to fill every fifth fillable vacancy in a sequence of six in each department.

Details of the competition

4. The competition, which will be run by the Civil Service Commission, will have two stages:
- **Stage 1** will consist of a shortlisting exercise. Candidates will be shortlisted on the basis of a detailed application form which they will have completed and returned to the Commission. The form will allow candidates to present their relevant skills and experience to best effect.
 - **Stage 2** will consist of a competitive structured interview, and will be open to candidates shortlisted from Stage 1. The interview board(s) will be set up by the Commission, and will consist of persons who have been fully trained in the structured interview technique.

Further details of Stages 1 and 2, including in particular the competencies to be assessed, are given in notes attached to the Commission application forms.

5. In ranking the candidates considered best qualified for appointment, the Commission will give credit for proficiency in both Irish and English, in accordance with the relevant circulars, to candidates qualified for such credit on or before the conclusion of the Stage 2 interviews (or such other date as may be agreed between the Official and Staff Sides).

TO ALL DEPARTMENTS [For department read department/office throughout this circular.]

Eligibility

6. In order to be eligible to compete, prospective candidates must,
- (a) be serving in an established capacity in the civil service in one of the following grades:
- Assistant Principal (standard scale)
 - Senior Auditor in the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General
 - First Secretary in the Department of Foreign Affairs
 - Assistant Principal Committee Clerk in the Office of the Houses of the Oireachtas
 - Investigator in the Offices of the Ombudsman and Information Commissioner

OR

- (b) (i) be serving in an established capacity in the civil service in one of the following grades:
- Higher Executive Officer (including HEO/Systems Analyst)
 - Administrative Officer
 - Third Secretary in the Department of Foreign Affairs
 - Auditor in the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General
 - Senior Clerk in the Office of the Houses of the Oireachtas
 - Systems Analyst in the IT and Telecommunications Division at Garda Headquarters of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
 - Social Welfare Officer in the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs

AND

(ii) on **1 June 2001** have at least four years' service in their existing grade or an aggregate of four years' service in eligible grades (set out at (i)), except in the case of a Social Welfare Officer or a Higher Executive Officer or an Administrative Officer who has prior service in the Social Welfare Officer grade or the former grade of Higher Officer of Customs & Excise (see paragraph 7).

7. Social Welfare Officers must have not less than nine years' service to be eligible to compete, and may count up to five years' service in the Executive Officer grade as service in the Social Welfare Officer grade for this purpose. Former Social Welfare Officers and former Higher Officers of Customs & Excise who have been recertified as Higher Executive Officers and/or appointed as Administrative Officers and who have less than four years' service in those recertified grades, must have an aggregate of at least nine years' service in eligible grades in order to compete. Service in the former grade of Higher Officer of Customs & Excise will count as service in an eligible grade. Former Higher Officers of Customs & Excise may count up to five years' service in the Executive Officer grade or in the former grades of Officer and Indoor Officer of Customs & Excise as service in the Higher Officer grade for this purpose.

8. Officers on probation are not eligible to compete except where they would have been eligible had they remained in their previous grade and they have served continuously since satisfactorily completing a period of probation. Periods of special leave without pay should not be considered to break continuity of service for this purpose.

9. Officers on special leave with pay may apply, if otherwise eligible, as may officers on secondment to FÁS from the civil service. Officers on special leave without pay (e.g. to serve with the EU) may be eligible; Personnel Sections should check cases not covered by Department of Finance Circular 33/91 with this department. Officers on career break may apply if their career break conforms with the terms of Department of Finance Circular 18/98 and if they are otherwise eligible.

10. The eligibility of any particular grade or group for appointment under the terms of the competition applies exclusively to the posts covered by the competition, as set out in paragraphs 2 and 3 above.

Appointments

11. Offers of appointments will be made from the panels in order of merit. An officer will have five working days after receipt of an offer to accept or reject it; failure by the officer to decide within that time-frame may be construed as a rejection of the offer. Officers not promoted at the expiry of the panels will have no claim to promotion thereafter because of having been on the panels. An officer who reverts will return to fill a vacancy in the grade previously held in the parent department just prior to promotion; the next person on the relevant panel will be appointed to the vacancy thus created.

12. The panels will be promotion panels. This means that empanelled officers who accept promotion to Assistant Principal (higher scale) level, whether such promotion derives from their panel placement or otherwise, will effectively remove themselves from the panels.

13. Any candidate who (a) resigns, retires, is suspended or is dismissed from his or her post or (b) is not qualified by the interview board as being suitable for promotion to Assistant Principal (higher scale), will not be eligible to be placed on the panels.

Refusal of appointments

14. An officer who refuses an offer of appointment from the panels will not receive another offer from the panels, unless the basis of refusal is geographic location.

Applications

15. Candidates should get their application forms from the Personnel Section of their serving department. The Commission will supply application forms to Personnel Sections on request. Candidates should return their completed application forms directly to the **Chief Executive Officer, Office of the Civil Service and Local Appointments Commissioners, 1 Lower Grand Canal Street, Dublin 2** to arrive not later than 5.30 p.m. on **Tuesday 27 March 2001**. This closing date must be strictly observed, since late applications will not be accepted.

16. The Civil Service Commission will contact Personnel Sections in respect of candidates being called to competitive interview. For each candidate called to competitive interview the Personnel Officer will be asked to give the Commission an assessment of the candidate's suitability for promotion on a form supplied by the Commission. The Personnel Officer will also be required to certify, in respect of each candidate being called to competitive interview, that the candidate;

- has been satisfactory and worked well in his or her present grade,
- has been satisfactory in general conduct, and
- fulfils the conditions of eligibility for the competition (see paragraphs 6-10 above).

17. Eligibility to compete, and health and the level of sick leave, are not verified by the Civil Service Commission until a candidate comes under consideration for appointment after Stage 2. So admission to the competition and placement on a panel do not imply that a candidate meets the health and sick leave criteria. In considering a candidate's suitability for appointment in terms of health and sick leave, the Commission will have regard to Department of the Public Service Circular 34/76, as amended by Department of Finance Circulars 32/91 and 33/99.

Candidates with doubts about any aspect of their eligibility should clarify their position with their Personnel Section before applying.

Duration of panels

18. The panels set up from the competition will become valid as soon as they are formed by the Civil Service Commission; they are expected to be available in May 2001. The panels' validity will extend to 31 December 2002, or until their exhaustion dates, whichever is the earlier.

Steering Committee

19. A Steering Committee, representative of the Official and Staff Sides, will monitor the progress of the panels with a view to resolving individual problems and addressing general issues which may arise. The Committee will, in particular, consult on the steps to be taken in the event that the panels become exhausted before their due expiry dates, or appear likely to do so.

Reservations

20. The Minister for Finance reserves the right to suspend or modify the arrangements set out above in the event of redundancy which has to be dealt with on a general service-wide basis. The Minister also reserves the right to arrange for the filling, by separate interdepartmental competition or otherwise, of vacancies at Assistant Principal (higher scale) level for which special circumstances exist. Before an interdepartmental competition is initiated in any such case, there will be consultation between the Official and Staff Sides.

Circulation and further information

21. Personnel Sections should bring this circular to the notice of all eligible officers serving in their departments and associated offices without delay, including officers on maternity leave, career break and other relevant forms of leave. If candidates have any queries about the circular they should contact their Personnel Section. Subsequent enquiries about their candidature should be addressed to the Civil Service Commission.

Mise le meas,

Joe McGovern
Assistant Secretary